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SUBJECT: RESPONDING TO NUCLEAR TERRORISM AND RADIOLOGICAL  
INCIDENTS - GERMANY'S TASK FORCE APPROACH

REF: A. 07 STATE 162091

[B](#). 05 BERLIN 3617

[C](#). 05 HAMBURG 93

[D](#). 06 HAMBURG 85

[1](#). (SBU) SUMMARY: German officials from the Federal Environment Ministry and the Federal Office of Radiation Protection (BfS) briefed NNSA Associate Administrator for Emergency Operations Admiral Krol on Germany's task force approach to respond to incidents of nuclear terrorism and other radiological incidents. In case of such an incident, the Federal Office of Criminal Investigation, the Federal Police, and BfS officials would stand up the federal Central Support Group (ZUB) to provide analysis, technical assistance, and recommendations to emergency response personnel in German states, which have the lead for detection and response under Germany's Constitution. Admiral Krol described the emergency response structure and capabilities of NNSA's Office of Emergency Operations. END SUMMARY.

[2](#). (U) U.S. Department of Energy National Nuclear Safety Administration Associate Administrator for Emergency Operations Admiral Joseph J. Krol and NNSA Office of Emergency Response Director Deborah Wilber visited Berlin May 7-8 for consultations with the German Federal Office of Radiation Protection (Bundesamt fuer Strahlenschutz, or BfS), a semi-autonomous implementation agency of the Federal Environment Ministry (BMU). Interlocutors included BfS Director General for Radiation Protection and Environment Gerald Kirchner; BfS Defense against Nuclear Hazards Task Force Director Michael Hoffmann; BfS physicist Emily Alice Kroeger; and Mechthild Caspers of the BMU's Office of Radiological Protection.

[3](#). (SBU) Krol and Wilber described the emergency response structure and capabilities of NNSA's Office of Emergency Operations, which provides technical advice from the DOE Complex in response to threats or acts of nuclear terrorism, radiological accidents, lost or stolen radioactive materials, nuclear weapon accidents, and malevolent threats or acts. Wilber highlighted NNSA's International Reach Back services, including:

- TRIAGE: a 24/7 on-call support service for first responder teams for analysis of nuclear data;
- International Exchange Program (IXP): a 24/7 service that provides support for radiological plume and dispersal modeling; and
- Radiation Emergency Assistance Center/Training Site (REAC/TS): a 24/7 on-call service for medical support for

radiation injuries.

14. (SBU) Krol and Wilber also described NNSA's radiological search and identification capabilities and provided an overview of NNSA efforts to address the challenges of maritime search operations. Wilber presented a case study based on an October 2005 operation to locate 17 suspect containers that had been shipped from Sri Lanka via several vessels to ports around the world. Scanning data analyzed post-departure showed a neutron signature from one of the containers. At the time, NNSA officials worked closely with officials in the port of Hamburg to exclude the three containers that had been shipped to Germany. None of the three containers that arrived in Hamburg was found to be contaminated (refs B and C).

#### GERMANY'S STATE/FEDERAL DIVISION OF LABOR POSES CHALLENGES

15. (SBU) The German Constitution divides responsibilities for prevention between the federal and state governments. Under the Atomic Energy Act and the Radiation Protection Ordinance, the federal government has responsibility for developing security regulations, implementing and maintaining safeguards, and compliance with international conventions. Germany's 16 states have the lead for detection and response but can request federal assistance in cases of emergency. Although states can request federal assistance in case of emergency, the states are required to bear the cost -- even when the federal government becomes involved.

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16. (SBU) According to Hoffmann, the lack of standardization at the state level in terms of equipment and response scenarios often creates difficulties for federal authorities. As Caspers noted, "there are no minimum legal standards." States with a large number of nuclear power plants have considerably more experience than states without. Authorities in different states also demonstrate varying levels of commitment, threat awareness, and interest in developing response capabilities. Caspers noted that the discovery of traces of Polonium-210 in Hamburg in December 2006 following the death of former KGB official Alexander Litvinenko the month before (see ref D) was a "wake-up call" for federal authorities. Hoffmann later presented a case study describing the Hamburg Polonium-210 incident, which highlighted the need to improve coordination with state authorities and communication with the public.

17. (SBU) In terms of emergency response, the federal government's role is limited to providing technical expertise, analysis, and recommendations. The federal government cannot provide funding and cannot take over emergency response. In case of emergency, the federal government's role would be to coordinate and to provide information and recommendations to state authorities.

#### FEDERAL LAW ENFORCEMENT LEADS ON CRIMINAL INVESTIGATIONS

18. (SBU) Although the states have the lead for emergency response and post-incident radiation protection, federal law enforcement assumes responsibility for any related criminal investigation. Because of the high likelihood of a terrorist link in most cases, the Federal Prosecutor General's standard procedure would be to order the Federal Office for Criminal Investigation (Bundeskriminalamt, or BKA) to launch an investigation. (NOTE: The BKA can also take over the case without permission from the Federal Prosecutor General if more than one state is involved. END NOTE.)

#### THE GERMAN TASK FORCE APPROACH

19. (SBU) In the event of a nuclear or radiological

incident, federal provision of technical assistance would occur via the deployment of the Central Support Group (ZUB), a federal task force composed of officials from the BfS, the BKA, and the Federal Police (Bundespolizei) -- the uniformed successor force to the German border guards. The Federal Police continues to patrol border areas with vehicles and air assets, including helicopters and fixed wing aircraft). In cases of incidents involving small and medium-size sealed sources, states would generally handle response independently. The ZUB, first established in 2003, responds in cases involving larger sealed sources and open sources. Under German law, ZUB can only become involved in cases where there is the loss or discovery of radioactive materials; serious danger to life, health, or property; and at the request of the state authorities when the state cannot undertake the required tasks itself.

¶10. (SBU) During the period of deployment, the ZUB is overseen by a joint crisis management staff composed of representatives from the BMU and the Interior Ministry (BMI) -- the federal ministry charged with oversight of the BKA and the Federal Police. According to Hoffmann, ZUB personnel can generally deploy within two hours of an incident and by deploying from four offices scattered around Germany, can be at the scene of an incident within another two hours.

¶11. (SBU) Federal Police and BKA units deployed as part of ZUB include a specialized bomb squad, forensics experts, SWAT teams, covert surveillance, and Federal Police air assets. In an emergency situation, BfS is charged with assessing criticality and risks, evaluating recovered materials, and estimating dispersal, radioactivity, and consequences. ZUB has 75 staff members on call on a rotating basis. An additional 700 experts are available to provide analysis in specialized areas. The task force has four specialized measurement teams with mobile equipment to analyze food supply, detect improvised nuclear devices and dirty bombs, to work with local authorities to set up ad

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hoc measurement and detection teams, and to calculate airborne contamination.

¶12. (SBU) In cases of emergency, ZUB personnel work closely with the crisis management structures of the affected state(s). The ZUB was designed to facilitate close interaction among scientists, crisis management professionals, and law enforcement. As a result, BfS and the BKA have focused on developing crisis management expertise and response procedures. ZUB personnel participate in frequent small-scale, focused exercises and conduct larger, more comprehensive exercises two or three times per year. According to Hoffmann, frequent exercising helps scientists and police build personal rapport and dissolves "cultural" barriers between the two groups. The current focus of exercises is improving internal and external communication.

#### OVERVIEW OF FEDERAL OFFICE OF RADIATION PROTECTION

¶13. (SBU) BfS has an annual budget of 220 million euros, of which 140 million euros is devoted to maintaining three mines used for the disposal of radioactive waste. The remaining 80 million euros puts the BfS budget on par with that of an average German research institution. BfS is responsible for all elements of transportation of nuclear fuel in Germany, as well as disposal and intermediate storage, oversight of non-NPP nuclear technology, licensing of nuclear-related medical equipment, and public information campaigns regarding protection measures. BfS is also responsible for protection and regulation of other forms of radiation, including electromagnetic and optical radiation. In non-emergency situations, BfS provides technical assistance, evaluation, estimation, and advice for the states in the area of detection and measurement.

BfS is responsible for implementing the EU directive on registration of larger radiological sources and for maintenance of Germany's 2200 measurement points, which provide full coverage of German territory.

¶14. (U) This message was coordinated with ConGen Hamburg and has been cleared by Admiral Krol.

TIMKEN JR.